Title: Professional Reading Program

"These are not books, lumps of lifeless paper, but minds alive on the shelves."
                                                    ~ Gilbert Highet

"Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man."
                                                    ~ Sir Francis Bacon

"Do not put statements in the negative form. And don't start sentences with a conjunction. If you reread your work, you will find on rereading that a great deal of repetition can be avoided by rereading and editing. Never use a long word when a diminutive one will do. Unqualified superlatives are the worst of all. If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is. Avoid trendy locutions that sound flaky. Never, ever use repetitive redundancies. Also, avoid awkward or affected alliteration. Last, but not least, avoid cliches like the plague."

                                        ~ William Safire, Rules for Writing

Introduction: Any study of the prominent statesman and military figures in the history of the United States of America will reveal that most of these individuals benefited from a considerable education, which often spanned time and cultures from the historical and philosophical works of Greek and Roman antiquity to contemporary political and scientific writings. Leaders such as Washington and Jefferson, Lincoln and Grant, Patton and Eisenhower were all avid readers. Others, like Benjamin Franklin and Theodore Roosevelt, were also prolific writers. Reading and writing are both part of life-long learning. Reading provides the mind with a breadth and depth of raw information. Writing enforces a level of mental discipline required to process information critically–to analyze and synthesize and evaluate–so as to be able to convert it into useful and original knowledge and communicate it clearly to others.

This Professional Reading Program lesson is intended to provide an opportunity to continue life-long learning, to expand one's sphere of knowledge and exposure to great minds of the past, to practice critical thinking, and to improve precision writing skills. It is also intended to model an approach toward establishing a Professional Reading Program as a mentorship tool within a command. Additionally, this IP provides an opportunity to learn from the similar explorations of seminar classmates by each sharing a brief oral presentation of their work in class.

Each student in a seminar will select a different book from one of the <u>current</u> Service Chief's or CJCS's reading lists (see links below). The book selection must be approved by the JSL instructor to have clear relevance to strategic leadership. It should not be a book that is required reading in another AWC course. The student will select the book in the first week of JSL (book selection is due by JSL IP 6202) and have until IP 6206 to read it and write a 750 to 1,000 word Critical Book Review and Analysis (CBRA). This paper will be due at the beginning of IP 6207. Additionally, each student will deliver a 10-minute oral presentation on their CBRA to the seminar during IP 6209. This day of seminar presentations provides a forum for all the students to benefit from the insights and interpretations of their peers on a broad spectrum of

books that they in turn might want to read themselves and incorporate into a professional reading program.

Lesson Objective: Analyze the utility of a professional reading program, both for an individual's professional development, and as part of an organization's professional development program. Evaluate each book read and, ultimately, provide a recommendation via a written CBRA and an oral presentation in Seminar.

Joint Professional Military Education Learning Areas (JPMELA) covered in this IP:

6. Joint Strategic Leadership
Phase II JPMELA: 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d

SAE: None
Nuclear: None

Main Areas of Emphasis: The purpose of this IP is to expose AWC students to the benefits of a professional reading program. These largely rest in three areas:

1. Promoting professional growth and increased competency in the military profession by reading and learning from quality literature on strategic leaders, leadership styles/traits, politics and policy development, campaigning and warfighting, Service histories and heritage, etc.

2. Reinforcing a habit pattern of life-long learning that relies on exploring others' experiences as much as relying on one's own.

3. Modeling an approach toward mentorship through education and conversation, where leaders can guide their subordinates toward being scholars of their profession and foster mutual professional development through casual conversation, logical argument, and precision writing.

Conduct of the Seminar:

Introduce the Professional Reading Program and the CBRA requirement for IP 6209 during the first IP (6201) of JSL. Students will propose their books to the instructor for approval no later than the end of the second IP (6202).

The first thirty minutes of IP 6209 might be used to discuss the utility of a reading program for both the individual as well as for a unit. Recommend instructors highlight the value that previous senior leaders have placed (and continue to place) on reading programs, as well as the concept of life-long learning. Comment upon and solicit comments from the students on their experiences with professional reading programs. Also, discuss possible TTPs which can be used to administer a reading program.

The concluding 3 hours of IP 6209 are to be used for student presentations to the seminar. Each student should have 10 minutes to make an oral presentation of their CBRA. Recommend assigning a student as timekeeper and allotting 8 minutes for the presentation and 2 minutes for questions. Instructors can choose to have students make their presentations from their seats or from the front of the classroom. Instructors may choose to distribute copies of each CBRA to all members of each seminar as part of a takeaway package.

Student Deliverables:

1. CBRA. Each student will turn in (both electronically and in hard copy) a 750 to 1,000 word CBRA. The format should be IAW the Air University Style and Author Guide (no cover page or table of contents or bibliography required). The essential elements of content are described in the grading rubric provided to instructors and students with this lesson. An example of a good CBRA from a former student is also provided. The CBRA is not a book report. A paper that simply recounts the book, no matter how eloquently will not satisfy the requirements of a CBRA and will be lacking mandatory items referenced in the grading rubric. A CBRA will include a statement of what major point(s) the book author attempted to make (theme, topic or thesis), evaluate how well the author succeeded in proving his or her points, and present evidence to support this evaluation. The CBRA counts as 30% of the JSL grade.

2. Oral presentation. Each student is to deliver a 10-minute oral presentation of their CBRA. Students should be prepared to answer a few questions from the Seminar without busting the time line. This event is counted as a significant part of the seminar contribution grade for the presenting student. The instructor should provide written feedback on clarity of communication and speaking style to each student in their contribution grades.

Desired Learning Outcomes:

1. Assess the utility of a professional reading program to help strategic leaders develop critical thinking skills, improve strategic communication, practice transformational leadership, evaluate ethical leadership challenges and operate effectively in the joint/multinational/ interagency environment. (Phase II JPMELA: 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d)

2. Assess the potential value of a book for potential inclusion in a professional reading program for strategic leaders. Collectively evaluate as a seminar a spectrum of books based upon oral presentations of each student. Assess each book's utility for enhancing critical thinking skills, strategic communication practices, transformational leadership techniques, ethical values and overall strategic leadership application in the joint/multinational/interagency environment. (Phase II JPMELA: 6a, 6b, 6c, 6d)

Questions for Study and Discussion:

1. What is the purpose of a professional reading program? How would you use such a program as a leadership tool?

2.   How relevant is a reading program given the advancements in technology we currently enjoy? How relevant will it be in the future given the exponential growth of technology and the continued high operational tempo?

3. Which book(s) would you recommend for a professional reading list as part of a professional development program in your organization/unit?

Assigned Readings: Student selects one book from any of the following professional reading lists and submits their choice to the JSL instructor for approval. Book will not be one that is required for another AWC core course. Each student in the seminar will choose a different book to maximize the variety.

- CJCS: http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/jcs/reading-list.htm
  (Cached copy from 2001)

- CSAF: http://www.af.mil/information/csafreading/index.asp

- CSA: http://www.history.army.mil/html/reference/reading_list/list4.html

- CNO: http://www.navyreading.navy.mil/books.aspx?q=Senior%20Leaders

- CMDT USMC:
  http://www.marines.mil/unit/tecom/mcu/grc/library/Pages/mcrl.aspx
  Select from the "Colonel" and above lists

- CMDT USCG: http://www.uscg.mil/leadership/resources/readinglist.asp

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